

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 1397

LIMDIS NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT

SUBJECT: MILAN POLITICAL SITUATION

MEMCON WITH ELIO QUERCIOLI, COMMUNIST CITY COUNCILMAN, REGIONAL
SECRETARY AND MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND CONGEN MILAN
AUGUST 5, 1975

1. QUERCIOLI SAID THAT HE WAS NOT A BIT HAPPY ABOUT THE
PRESENT SITUATION IN MILAN. HE WAS DISSATISFIED BECAUSE THE
FORMATION OF THE NEW CITY GOVERNMENT HAD POISONED RELATIONS
WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. THEY WERE HOPPING MAD ABOUT
THE DEFECTION OF OGLIARI AND SIRTORI. AND THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS WERE BREAKING UP BEFORE ONE'S EYES. THAT, SAID
QUERCIOLI, WAS ALSO BAD NEWS.

2. HE RETURNED TO A THEME THAT HAS MARKED OUR EARLIER CON-
VERSATIONS. THE COMMUNIST PARTY CANNOT COME TO SHARE POWER IN
ITALY WITHOUT THE APPROVAL AND COVER OF THE CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE, HE ARGUED, THAT THE PCI
SHOULD EVER HAVE A MAJORITY IN ITALY. AND EVEN A MAJORITY OF
51 PERCENT WOULD NEVER BE ENOUGH. FOR THE COMMUNISTS TO GOVERN,
HE CONTINUED, WE WOULD NEED 75 0/0 OF THE VOTE. AND THAT IS
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SIMPLY FANTASY.

3. THE REASON THAT THE PCI WOULD NEED SUCH A MARGIN, HE EXPLAINED, IS THE DISTRUST WHICH THE ITALIAN MIDDLE CLASS AND MANAGERIAL CLASS HAS FOR COMMUNIST PARTIES. TO THAT MUST BE ADDED THE DISTRUST AND FEAR OF THE SWISS, GERMANS, FRENCH AND ENGLISH TO SAY NOTHING OF THE AMERICANS. NO GOVERNMENT COULD SURVIVE IN ITALY, HE INSISTED, THAT LACKED THE CONFIDENCE OF THESE FORCES WHICH CONTROL TRADE, INVESTMENT AND CREDIT.

4. PORTUGAL WAS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW NOT TO PROCEED, HE LAMENTED. THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS DESTROYING ITSELF AND ANY HOPE OF DEMOCRACY. HOW CAN IT DREAM OF RULING WITH 15 0/0 OF THE VOTE? QUERCIOLE HAD NO KIND WORDS FOR THE PORTUGUESE CP. THE PCI HAD SENT A DELEGATION TO ADVISE AGAINST THIS FOLLY. BUT IT WAS TREATED RUDELY AND TOLD THAT THE PCI WAS NOT A COMMUNIST PARTY AT ALL BUT REFORMISTS. THE TROUBLE WAS, HE CONTINUED, THE PORTUGUESE WERE FOLLOWING THE FRENCH CP AND TO SOME EXTENT THE SOVIETS THEMSELVES. THE SPANISH CP WAS HORRIFIED. HE HAD JUST MET WITH ONE OF ITS LEADERS WHO COMPLAINED BITTERLY. THE WHOLE PORTUGUESE EXAMPLE WAS DESTROYING SPANISH ACCEPTANCE OF THE CP THERE AND REDUCING THE CHANCES OF EMERGENCE OF A DEMOCRATIC REGIME. ACCORDING TO QUERCIOLE, THE SPANISH CP WANTED A GENUINE DEMOCRATIC REGIME AND AGREED WITH THE PCI THAT ANY OTHER OBJECTIVE WAS SELF-DEFEATING. HOW, HE ASKED, COULD THE PORTUGUESE CP POSSIBLY IMAGINE IT COULD PREVAIL IF AN ALLIANCE OF SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS COULD NOT SURVIVE IN CHILE? SOARES, HE SAID, WAS RIGHT AND THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS WERE WRONG.

5. ALL OF THIS RELATED TO THE ITALIAN SCENE. FROM TOGLIATTI ON, THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP HAD KNOWN THAT GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WAS UNTHINKABLE. AND HE CITED THE HISTORY OF SUPPORT FOR BADOGLIO, THE 1947 CONSTITUTION AND THE LATERAN PACTS, ETC.

6. THERE WERE THOSE IN THE PCI, HE ADMITTED, WHO REJECTED THIS ANALYSIS AND WANTED TO TRY TO RULE WITH THE SOCIALISTS ALONE. BUT THEY WERE A MINORITY AND THEIR ANALYSIS DEAD WRONG.

7. THE MILAN SITUATION WOULD BE PAINFUL. THE CITY HAD A HUGE
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DEBT AND WOULD HAVE TO BORROW TO COVER COSTS. WITHOUT THE GUARANTEE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION, THAT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT. AND THERE WAS NO SUCCESSFUL WAY TO BLAME THE FAILURE ON ROME. THE CITIZEN WANTED THE PROBLEM SOLVED, NOT AN EXPLANATION OF WHY SOMEONE ELSE WAS TO BLAME.

8. THE PCI WOULD BE MAKING AN EFFORT TO CLEAN UP GOVERNMENT HERE. HE HAD ALREADY INSISTED THAT THE ASSESSORS BE DEPRIVED OF THEIR

CARS AND DRIVERS. THAT CREATED A FUROR. BUT HOW COULD ONE JUSTIFY THAT SORT OF THING WHEN THE CITY WAS GOING BROKE? THE PCI WOULD ALSO RESIST A RUSH TO FILL JOBS WITH IT OWN MEN. THAT WOULD ALSO CREATE PROBLEMS WITHIN HIS PARTY. BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO SUCCEED. HE HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD CONTINUE TO SHARE THE PATRONAGE AND HE MEANT THAT. AFTER ALL, EVEN WHILE THE PCI WAS IN THE OPPOSITION, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS GAVE THEM A CERTAIN NUMBER OF MUNICIPAL JOBS. THERE HAD TO BE THAT TOLERANCE FOR THE LOSER OR THE GAME COULDN'T GO ON.

9. PCI CITY COUNCILMEN, LIKE OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS, RECEIVE ONLY ABOUT HALF OF THEIR PUBLIC SALARY. THE REST GOES TO THE PARTY. TODAY THAT MEANS AN INCOME OF ABOUT ONE AND ONE HALF MILLION LIRE WHICH IS SIGNIFICANT, HE SAID. MOREOVER, WITH THE JUMP IN THE NUMBER OF ELECTED OFFICIALS, THAT INCOME WILL RISE, TOO. QUERCIOLI EXPLAINED THAT ELECTED MEMBERS AGREE THAT THEIR PAY GOES DIRECTLY TO ONE OF THEIR NUMBER WHO THEN PAYS BACK TO EACH HIS SHARE. THOSE WHO REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE ARE NOT RUN AGAIN AS CANDIDATES.

10. REFORM IN MILAN WOULD NOT BE EASY, HE ADMITTED. IT WAS MADE HARDER BY THE FACT THAT THE MAYOR AND A NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATION WERE HOLDOVERS. ANY REFORM WAS AN IMPLICIT ADMISSION BY THEM OF EARLIER FAILURE OR SHORTCOMING. THAT MADE IT A LOT HARDER TO DO WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.

11. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE IN DEEP TROUBLE. THEY HAD NO COHERENT POLITICAL POSITION. AND LACKING THAT, THEY WERE INEFFECTIVE. HE DID NOT THINK THE DC WOULD COLLAPSE. IT HAD TOO MUCH HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL SUBSTANCE FOR THAT. BUT

RIGHT NOW IT WAS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT AS A POLITICAL FORCE.
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ANYONE WHO THOUGHT THIS MEANT THAT THE TIME FOR THE LEFT HAD COME, HOWEVER, WAS DELUDING HIMSELF.

12. THIS HELPED TO EXPLAIN WHY THE PCI OPPOSED EARLY NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THERE WAS NO BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM INCREASING THE PCI PARLIAMENTARY VOTE TO 35 0/0 AND CREATING A NATIONAL EQUATION THAT WAS UNSTABLE BECAUSE THERE WAS NO SOLID DC PARTY WITH WHICH TO DEAL.

13. IN ALL, QUERCIOLI WAS VERY SOBER AND LEFT THE IMPRESSION OF A MAN WHO IS BOTH SUCCEEDING IN MASTERING A GREAT TEMPTATION TO REJOICE AT SUCCESS AND IS VERY NERVOUS ABOUT THE RISKS OF SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF MILAN WITH THE SOCIALISTS WHILE THE DC HAS FREE REIGN IN THE OPPOSITION.
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